

ΤΗΣ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ἙΛΕΓΧΟΣ:
OR THE
REASON
OF
FAITH:

Briefly discuss'd in a
SERMON,

Preach'd at *Pauls* before the Right Honourable,
The Lord Mayor, &c. The third of *October*, 1658.
And publish'd by the Order of his Lordship, and
Court of Aldermen.

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where is the Wise? where is the Scribe? where is the Disputer of this
World? 1 Cor. 1. 20.

Η' (μέν) ὡς ἀρτῶ, ἀναγκαῖα πρὸς τὸ ζῆν, ἢ κατὰ τὴν αἴσιν ἀλήθεια
ἢ προπαίδεια δὲ προσοψύματι ἴσικεν, καὶ τραγῆματι. Clem. Alexandr.
lib. 1. Strom.

Quantum attinet ad hominis naturam, nihil est in eo melius quam mens
& ratio; sed non secundum ipsam debet vivere, qui beatè vult vivere:
alioquin secundum hominem vivit, cum secundum Deum vivendum sit, ut
possit ad beatitudinem pervenire, propter quam consequendam, non seipsa de-
bet esse contenta, sed Deo mens nostra subdenda est. Aug. lib. 1. Retraction.

LONDON, Printed by E. M. for Ralph Smith at the Bible in *Corn-hil*,
near the Royal Exchange. 1659.

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE,
S^r RICHARD CHIVERTON K^t.

Lord Mayor of the CITY of LONDON,
And to the Honourable Court of Aldermen,

Right Honourable !

His ensuing Sermon which I never thought should have breath'd much above an houre, (unlesse in them that heard it;) is now at your command, to receive a kinde of new life; and to walk abroad in the view of all men: it onely staves in a line or two to crave your protection; which (being it comes forth only at your Honours call) your goodnesse will not, and your justice cannot deny. — As for the subject of this discourse. I may truly say: it is not unworthy of you, as men; but 'tis highly necessary for you, as Christians. Humanity requies you to skill of the right use of reason: and Christianity expects you should not be ignorant of the Prerogatives of Faith. Reason indeed makes you men; 'tis Faith onely that can make you good men: and better were it never to have been men, than not to have been good.

I do not at all intend the least prejudice to Reason. I am not so Cynical as to bark at that Moon-light (this would be but an ungrateful requital for this Royal gift which our Creatour hath bestow'd upon us) though I cannot equal it, much less prefer it to Faith. As that housholder does not injure his inferiour guests, when he says unto them, stand ye here, and to the more honourable, come up hither.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Of the two I confess, Reason as Leah, is indeed the elder, but tender-eyed: and though seven years service is not too much for her; yet how many more would be well spent for the obtaining of her younger, but more amiable sister, Faith? though Reason is the first-born; yet Faith hath the blessing; and concerning these, that determination holds true too. The elder shall serve the younger.

But oh! What opposition does this meet withal in the minds of men? How hard is it to persuade them to become fools; though it be only as a means to make them wise? I know not which, if compar'd, doth more exert the Almighty power of the Spirit of grace; the bringing into subjection the high thoughts, or the strong lusts that resisted it. I am sure it is full out as difficult to make the blinde to see, as it is to make the lame to walk.

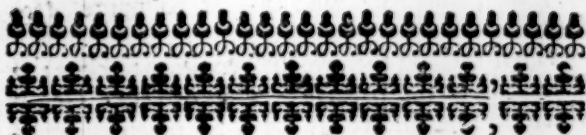
We are then certainly as earnestly to labour to bring our mindes, as our lives unto the obedience of faith. It is no more lawful in the things of Religion to think as we list; then it is in our daily conversation to practice what we please. A defluxion from the head will soon corrupt the other parts: and nothing is more dangerous, then to suffer this childe of the bond-woman, Reason; to laugh at Faith, the heir of the promise: if we mock God, or his Word; he also will have us in derision.

*The sum then of what I have in this truth's behalf to require of you; is but what I hope, the justice of this Honourable Court acts daily, *summ cuique tribuere*, to give to every one that which is his. When any case betwixt these two parties; Faith and Reason; shall be pleaded before you, or rather in you: give unto Reason, the things that are Reasons; and to Faith, the things that are of Faith. Honour your God by believing things which you do not see, and he will honour you, causing you to see hereafter those things which you do here believe; which mercy especially I earnestly beg for you of the God of mercy, acknowledging my self,*

Right Honourable!

At Corn-hil, October
26. 1658.

The most Obliged
to serve you in the Lord;
PETER VINKE.



THE
R E A S O N
OF
F A I T H.

HEBREWES II. I.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped
for ; the evidence of things not seen.*



He blessed *Apostle* (or whosoever
was the Penman of this Epistle)
having told the believing *Hebrewes*
of the great need they had of *pati-*
ence, chap. 10. ver. 36. and fore-
told the Apostasie of many by rea-
son of the want of it, in the words fore-going my
Text: In this *Chapter* he seasonably brings in a
B discourse

discourse of *faith*, this grace being the best food to strengthen *patience*; and *physick* to purge *Apo-
stasie*.

Dr. Gouge in
locum.

The first thing then we shall consider to clear the Context, is the particle, *now* or *but*; Gr. *δε* which as some observe, is the note of an *assumpti-
on*, or *minor proposition* in a *Syllogisme*. The whole Argument may be fram'd thus, *If faith be the sub-
stance of things hoped for, and the evidence of
things not seen; the just that live by it, as in
chap. 10. ver. 38. &c. may well be patient, and
need not think of drawing back, ver. 39. but faith
is the substance, &c.*

Hence it is that the *Apostle* throughout this Chapter enlarges only upon this subject; and as in this first verse he layes down the *doctrine* of faith, so in the following verses he speaks to the *practice* of it; *Examples* having this advantage above *Pre-
cepts*, that they shew their feasibility or practicableness; a believer will not have a harder task enjoined him, than faith hath enabled many to undergo, witnesse the whole *cloud of witnesses* here specified: and therefore he may with the more courage and confidence buckle himself unto it. The words themselves are not a perfect definition of faith by *genus* and *differentia*, faith being of an *indefinite* nature. And how can we look for the perfection of that grace here, the nature of which we cannot sufficiently comprehend?

They are then a two-fold *description* of faith.

1. *A forma interna.* 'Tis a *substance*, 'tis an *evidence*.

2. *Ab objectis externis.* Of things hoped for, of things not seen.

Each part you see hath *twins*, and those very like one another; we intend to speak to them in their order, as they lay in the words.

The first word that holds forth the internal *form* or nature of faith, is *πίστις*, which (together with *ἐλπίς* in the latter part,) is purely *Philosophical*, taken out of the field of Philosophy, and planted here in Scripture, *the garden of the Lord*. It signifies according to its notation, these two things.

Faith's first internal form.
πίστις
which signifies

1. *Substance*, which is so call'd, *quia substat accidentibus, & ea sustinet*,) because it bears up *accidents*, which could not be without it. As the colour and dimensions of this book could not be without the *substance* of it.

1. *Substantia.*

Thus faith is the *substance* that sustains and bears up all other *graces*; 'tis the *primum vivens*, the heart in the new man. Does he live? 'tis by *faith*, Rom. 1. 17. If he stands; 'tis by *faith*, 2 Cor. 1. 24. Can he walk too? 'tis by the same faith, 2 Cor. 5. 7. Without this, he is as another man. His patience, unlesse upon the account of faith, *because thou didst it*, is but stupidity, or a Stoical *apathy*: His hope, unlesse it be through this grace, it is not *the good hope*, 'tis presumption: His mirth, unlesse he *rejoyses in believing*, is madness: Nay, without faith his best performances are but the better sort of sins; only the hand of faith can lay them upon that Altar which sanctifies the gift; To do a *spiritually living action* in order to the

Ps. 39. 9.
2 Thess 2. 16.
Gal. 2. 2.
Splendida pec-
cara.

service of a *living God*. *Δὲ τὸ εἶδος*, there must be a principal of life within.

Whatsoever we do, unlesse in order to expresse our obedience and thankfulness to God through Christ, be it never so *good* for the *matter* of the action, 'tis not *well* done in the *manner* of it; and God does not say if thou doest *good*, but if thou doest *well* shalt thou not be accepted? *Gen. 4. 7.* We confesse the flowers of morality, (just and fair dealings,) may make mens names sweet amongst their neighbours; when in the mean time unlesse they live and act by faith, their persons and services may stink in the Nostrils of God. These may wash thy face and hands, but it is faith onely *which can purifie thy heart*; thou art but a Cyclops, a Monster in Gods fight if thou hast not the eye of faith.

Acts 15. 9.

2. *Subsistentia*.

2. The word *ὑπόστασις*, signifies *subsistence*, and *subsistere* is *in rerum natura prodire*; to *subsist* is to have an *actual being*. Thus faith gives a *being* to its *objects*; it makes the *things hoped* for, to be as if they now *actually* were; as by a *prospective glass*, things very far distant seem close by to the eye of the body: so by faith, the *promises* (though many of them not to come till the end of all things) appear at hand: Hence the *Syriack Interpreter* reads these words thus, *Est autem fides certitudo de iis rebus quæ sunt in spe, ac si jam extiterunt actu*. A believer is as willing to have Gods promise, as its performance; and dares take his word as readily as present payment. What the Schools say of the *divine intellect*, I may say of all that

that do partake of the *divine nature*, to such, *omnia coexistunt*, all things are as if present with them : if they look backward to the Creation of the world, their eye of faith views it as clearly as if they had been amongst the *Morning-stars* that *shouted when the foundations of the earth were laid*. Job 38. 6, 7. And if they look forward to the dissolution of all things, they see the *heavens and earth already fleeing away*. Rev. 20. 11.

Give me leave to raise this note a little higher ; Some read the following word, (*ἐν πνεύματι*) actively, as Saint *Austin* amongst others : and then the sense would be, faith is the very *subsistence of them that hope* ; to adde a word to what I hinted but now. Faith is the *differentia constitutiva* of a *Christian* ; as reason makes us men, so faith makes us Christians. He that followes sensual objects, and is taken with them, lives the life of a *beast*. He that lives according to the dictates of reason, (deals fairely and squarely, (as you use to speak) he lives the life of a *man* ; but he that lives in the obedience of faith, when he prays, prays in faith ; when he hears, mixes the Word with faith, &c. This is *he* that lives indeed the life of a *Christian* : Nay, he liveth the life of God, delighted with, and joying in the same objects with God ; to him onely 'tis given *intelligere ut Angelus*, and *Velle ut Deus* : to understand as Angels do, and to will as his God does. Rom. 16. 26.

The *object* of faith, or the things of which faith is the *substance*, are call'd here *things hoped for*, which because they are the same with the *things not*

2. Its object.
ἐν πνεύματι.

seen, as appears by *Rom. 8. 24.* I shall speak of them together, not being able to take any notice of the lesse material differences which some make betwixt them. Come we rather to the second *description*: in which we shall speak more to that, which is the *businessse* of the Text.

The other internal form of Faith. *ἐλεγχος.*

The other word that the Apostle uses to express the nature of *faith* by, is *ἐλεγχος*; it signifies a *demonstration* or undeniable proof. Thus the *Philosopher* frequently, and in this sense *Scripture* uses it, as *John 16. 8.* 'tis said of the *Spirit*, that when he is come, *ἐλέγξει, i. e. he shall convince the world.*

Chrysost. in loc.

Πᾶσαν ἀπολογίαν αὐτῶν ἐκκλύει. He shall bring such arguments and *evidences* as shall take away all excuse.

Faith then is the *evidence* or *demonstrative argument*: that is; the souls believing in him that speaks; commands, promises, threatens in the *Word*, is instead of ten thousand arguments to prove the righteousness and truth of what it findes there recorded.

Faith, as such, does not at all consider the probability or improbability of the things themselves which are recorded in God's Words; but it looks singly at the truth, and *Authority* of the Speaker. *Credimus quia legimus.*

The Arguments which are drawn for the confirmation of our Religion from Myracles, the number of its Martyrs, its admirable successe, and consent of all its Mysteries, the correspondency it hath with reason, are indeed powerful considerations to make easie and familiar the actings of Faith,
but

but Gods faithfulness is the onely motive of Faith. And in this consists the maine difference betweene *Faith* and *Science*. In Arts and Sciences we do not give our assent to any thing, till we have found out its nature, and causes: but in matters of Faith we first assent and believe God on his word; and then possibly we search after the reason of the things we have believed: not for our own satisfaction (to whom Gods Authority is foundation strong enough to build upon) but *that we may be able and ready to give an answer to them that ask us a reason of our hope*, 1 Pet. 3. 15.

*Scire est excau-
fis cognoscere.*

And is not this evidence strong enough to a believer?

1. He hath Gods Word for what he believes.
Dictum Jehovah, The Word of the Lord came, &c.

1.

2. Not a bare word, but his solemn promises,
Rom. 1. 2.

2.

3. Many of these things are confirmed with an Oath too, *Heb. 6. 13.*

3.

4. To which also God hath put his seal, *Rom. 4. 11.*

4.

5. And given actually an earnest of them all in their hearts that believe, *2 Cor. 1. 22.*

5.

Surely then the Believers *Thus saith the Lord*, is a better argument than the *disputers* *αὐτὸς εἶπεν*, or *Thus saith the Philosopher*.

Let then others give it for a Rule (as the Philosophers did of old) *μὴ πιστεύειν*, to receive nothing upon the credit of whomsoever. Or according to the late Mode, *To doubt of all things*. The believers way is *πιστεύειν*, to take Gods Word; and to

to think himself well enough assured of any thing that God hath asserted there, though at present it be *not seen*.

The other expression of faith's object 'tis *ὁ Θεοῦ ἰσχυρὸς*.

That is the other property of the Object of Faith, *It is not seen*. That is, it is not, it cannot be comprehended by sense or reason.

Thus throughout the whole *Sphere* of faith's activity, its object does not appear.

1.

Heb. 11. 3.

1. In *things past*, it believes *the Creation of the world, &c.*

2.

Coloff. 3. 1.

2. In *things present*, Faith believes the *Providence of God, the sitting of Christ at the right hand of the Father, his Intercession, &c.*

3.

Psal. 96. 13.

3. In *things to come*, It believes *the Resurrection, Judgment, &c.* and yet none of these are *seen*.

Nay, how many things does the Christian *believe*, when the very contrary unto them seem to appear? as that a *Virgin* should conceive, that *God* should become man, &c. Unto which the unbelievers blasphemously reply, *Tam Jupiter Taurus, quam Deus homo.*

I shall make some further instances; the rather because this is a main foundation of that truth which will close up all.

1. Faith believes the doctrine of Justification, that they who are *called*, are *justified*, Rom. 8. 30. and yet what abundance of guilt is the true believer haunted withal? what bitter complaints and teares come daily from him?

2. Scripture tells us that the people of God are a *holy Nation*, 1 Pet. 2. 9. and do they *see* this? Is not the Canaanite still in the land? Oh what dirty corners

corners doe the Sunne discover in that roome or heart where it shines? when the Sunne is up, what abundance of dust flies about when the house is sweeping? what swarmes of corruptions whilest the heart is a cleansing.

3. Gods Word sayes, that *they are blessed that trust in him*, Psal. 2. 12. But certainly it is an hidden and *invisible* happinesse? is it a happinesse to be *imprison'd, mock'd, ston'd, &c.* as the Worthies were, we read of in this Chapter?

4. There is an *abundance of all things promised to them that fear God*, Psal. 34. 9. And didst ever see this? I mean by *sense or reason*; it appears indeed they have an *abundance*, but *of all miseries*, not otherwise: *Paul* had abundance of *Ship-wracks, Scourgings, Stonings*, 2 Cor. 11. 25. but *nothing* else, 2 Cor. 6. 10.

5. Gods promise is, that *he will be with us*, Isa. 43. 2. Certainly this does not *appear*, unless to the eye of faith; who, but a very strong believer could have seen God with his people in *Gideon's* time? *Judges* 6. 13.

6. The children of God have an eternal life assured to them, *Rev.* 2. 10. What appears in order to this? they dye as well as others; and *where is the promise?*

7. Ay but there shall be a resurrection, 1 Cor. 15. This is as little *seen* as the other; what preparation is there towards it after death? the body runs through many changes; into corruption, wormes meat, dust, &c. but still there is nothing *seen* in the *charnal houses and sepulchres* that seems a fit

C

ingredient

1 Cor. 15. 43.

ingredient into the *glorious body* that is promised. To forbear more particulars; If sense and reason were to give in their verdicts on them, it would be at best but a *non constat*, there is not one of them *evident*.

Reasons why
the object of
faith is thus not
seen.

And Gods hand appears much in thus ordering the matter: that *reason* its self should not attain to the things pertaining to God.

1. By these means God sets forth the vanity of the wisdom of the flesh, which 'tis his designe to confound and debase, 1 Cor. 1. 19, 20.

2. God thus advances his own glory; all saving knowledge and heavenly wisdom being necessarily his gift: when the noblest plant in natures garden (*reason*) cannot produce such fruit.

3. Thus God observes a just proportion between the object and faculty; *spiritual objects* require a *spiritual faculty*: as the eye of the body cannot see *spiritual substances*, no more can a carnal minde discern *spiritual truths*; *nil diurnum nox capit*. To omit other reasons.

Having thus explained the words; that which I shall pitch upon, is the result of them all, especially the latter clause; in this *observation*.

Observ.

That *faith only is the evidence of things not seen*; when the other faculties cannot discover them, but look upon them as doubtful, if not false; faith accounts them *evident* and *certain*. For the understanding of this, we must know that every thing is properly *evident* to that *faculty* to which it does belong, as *sensible things* are obvious to *sense*; *rational conclusions* are approv'd of by *reason*:

Hoc fides credat, intelligentia non requirat ut aut non inventum putes incredibile, aut verum non credas singulare. Bern. de cata. Domini.
1 Cor. 2. 14.
Prudentius.

reason: and the *things of God* are in the *sphere* only of faith. Now these three, *sense*, *reason* and *faith*, being all from God, (his works in man) cannot be contrary one to another: neither does any one of them destroy the other: neither can any thing be true in one, that is false in another, if rightly understood. As for example: when *sense* sayes that much drink is good for one in a Fever or Dropsie; *reason* does not contradict this; that to *sense* 'tis good; only upon a better account it corrects its judgment: so when *reason* dictates that *nothing can be made out of nothing*, and so would deny the Creation; that when the privation is total, the habit cannot be introduc'd again, and from thence would deny the Resurrection: Faith does not deny but that these *axiomes* as to *second causes*, and in the lower orbe of *reason* are true; only it corrects their malignity by shewing a more excellent way; and bidding of us look a story higher, unto God, unto whom all things are possible.

Omne verum à
quocunque ve-
nit, à Spiritu
sancto venit.
Aug.

And as if you would act *rationally*, you must *claudere quinque fenestras*, not follow your sensual appetites; so if you will act *religiously*, you will be forc'd in many cases to say with *Luther*, *in stulta ratio, tace*, thou foolish *reason*, give way. Let our *Apostle* be heard in this case, who tells us concerning the *mysteries of Religion*, 1 Cor. 2. 9. *that eye hath not seen, nor eare heard*, (they are out of the reach of *sense*) *neither have they entred into the heart of man*; (they exceed the capacity of *reason*) — And therefore when a soul is conquered, and taken in for God, the *Articles* of

* *Adversus sci-
entiam Dei, qua
est Christiano-
rum fides.*
Bern. Ad Mil-
ites Templi,
lib. 5. c. 13.

its *Surrender* are, that it should now cast down ima-
ginations, and every high thing that exalts it self
against the knowledge of God; and bring into
captivity every thought (*πάν νοῦν*) to the obedience
of Christ, 2 Cor. 10. 5. So that henceforth this
soul must according to this agreement give up its
self to be taught of God those things which its
nature is neither able nor willing otherwise to con-
ceive of.

I know I am upon a ticklish point. This truth
stands betwixt the *Scylla* of *Enthysia*s, who are
ready to decry every thing because it is rational:
and the *Charybdis* of Socinians, who cavil at e-
very thing that is above the level of *their* reason:
as if they needed to fear to be guilty of blinde obe-
dience, when they have the Sun of Righteous-
nesse, God in his Word, to go before them. I
shall endeavour to do something towards the resolu-
tion of this great case in several particulars. I
will not call it my *award* betwixt these two parties,
faith and *reason*: yet I shall labour to give to each
its due.

The use of rea-
son and faith
laid down, 1.
Positively. 1. In
Civil Affairs.

1. Positively.

1. 'Tis granted on all sides that *reason* hath its
use in Civil Affairs and Worldly Matters; those
that deny it to be a *Jacob's ladder* to climb up into
heaven by, acknowledge it to be an useful *staffe* to
walk upon *earth* withal. We are not to pull out
this *eye* because we cannot look stedfastly with it
upon the *Sunne*. The *Musitian* does not cut off
the strings and throw them away because the In-
strument is out of tune.

Nay

Nay more, *reason* is useful in the *things of God*. a In Religious Matters.

1. *Reason* is necessary for the conversion of Pagans and Infidels to the faith of Christ; the very *milk of the Word* is too *strong meat* for such at first. 'Tis in vain to alledge *Scripture* to such as are not yet induc'd to believe the authority of it. We must deal with such, as men that cure the bodily blinde; not bring them at first to gaze upon the Sunne, but use them to lesser lights, till at last they be able to look upon the greatest. Thus nature does not expose us to the Sun-beams immediately out of pitchy darknesse, till she hath inured us by a *twilight* to bear them.

2. Reason is the *subject* of divine knowledge in a believing soul, 'tis the vessel which God fills with the oile of *this* grace. God in Regeneration does not make another faculty, *another eye*, but purges it. As at the first time of writing the Law, God afforded the Tables and writing too; but at the renewing of it, *Moses provided the Tables*, though the writing still was Gods; in our Creation, we have heart and holinesse, both minde and knowledge, Tables and writing from God; but in our renovation God takes the faculties which we have already, and engraves his Image on them; God makes all things indeed *new* in *quality*, not in *substance*. And this is the greater miracle of the two, that the same man should by the same faculty apprehend the same things so diversly from what he did in his unregeneracy; worldly things which were so great in his eyes (as when the prospective glasse is turn'd)

Exod. 24. 12.
Exod. 34. 1.

seem now very small and inconsiderable : and the things of God which did scarce appear unto him, (as if he had now got Galileo's glasse to look on the heavens withal) he views them in their just dimensions.

3. Reason is the *Instrument* that God makes use of to direct and guide the *whole man* by. 'Tis the *Rudder in the ship*, let it be bound for what place it will; that as whatsoever we hear, we hear by the ear; and whatsoever we see, we see by the eye : so whatsoever we understand, we understand by this faculty. By the eye of our understanding (when enlightened) we know what is the hope of our calling, &c. Ephes. 1. 18.

By reason we know what may be inferr'd from Scripture, and what not. Hence, not to mention the *Trinity*, &c. we grant, and use two Sacraments, because reason infers these from Scripture, and on the other side we reject a great many that others would bring into the Church, because we cannot by reason prove them to be commanded there.

4. I may adde moreover, there is nothing which *faith* believes, but what is, when thoroughly understood, agreeable to *right reason*. It may be above it, it cannot, as you have heard, be against it. True reason did never go about to comprise the *Bible* in its own nut-shell; faith it self is but a kind of a new life of reason. 'Tis the highest reason to believe what God sayes without further enquiry. If ye have not made your selves more the children of darknesse, than ye yet were by nature, and if

Ταυτὸν ἔστι τὸ
ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἔστι
τὸ πρῶτον λό-
γος. Plutarch.
περὶ τῆς ἀλήθειας.

if God hath not in judgment blinded you, and given you over to a reprobate minde, does not your very reason tell you how vain it is to measure immensity by a finite compasse; or span eternity by your imperfect duration? To fathom the depth of the *Wisdom of God* by the line and plummet of the *wisdom of man*; Rom. II. 33. I have read of one of the Antients, (I think 'twas *Austin*) who being very thoughtful about the Nature and Essence of God; he espies as he was meditating by the Sea shoar, a young man taking the water out of the Sea with a Ladle, and putting of it into a little hole which he had made. The *Father* demands the reason of so frivolous an employment. The young man tells him, that he was emptying the sea into that hole; and that he might sooner make the vast Ocean to be contained in that small place, than the other should comprehend the deep Mysteries he was meditating of, in his shallow understanding.

Being we have freely granted thus much, I hope none will be offended if we dare not go further in its commendation; but must, lest we should encroach on *Faith*, prescribe some bounds to *Reason*. Negatively.

1. *Reason* may not be the *Rule* to try or measure revealed truths by; that you should believe no more than what it affirms to. I am not to do any thing in *Religion*, because I think it rational, it may be *will-worship*, but to the *Law* and to the *Testimony*. Neither are we to admit only so much of *Scripture*, as we fancy to be consonant to *reason*; but we are to admit so much only of *reason*, as we are

1st. 8. 20.

are sure is not contrary to Scripture; the lesser gives way to the greater. God made the Scripture-light as the Sunne to rule the Gospel-day: the Moon-light of *reason* he makes to rule the night; amongst those that *sit in darknes*, and in the shadow of death. And if at any time we go to Law with revealed truths before this *Heathen Judge*, *reason*: we might win the case indeed; but lose truth, and hazard our souls.

The grounds of this assertion, are,

1. The impotency of *reason*; this eye is blood-shot, it cannot see throughly into *natural causes*: if you think it can, tell me from whence comes the heat of the stomach, the strength of the nether jaw: stand upon the banks of our *Euripus*, the *Thames*, and give a satisfactory reason of its ebbing and flowing: Or answer me those questions propounded in the 36. 37, 38. Chapters of *Job*. And if thy reason be either not faithful or able in *its own things*, who will commit unto it the resolution of those things that are not its own?

2. But suppose it had not contracted any *impotency*, yet at best, *reason* is fallible, and may be deceiv'd. The eye is the most certain of all the senses, and yet I have read of twenty wayes whereby it may be deceived in its *Object*. I am sure there are many more wayes whereby this *eye* of the minde may be imposed upon; reason at best is a creature: it hath erred, it may erre, and we should be alwayes at incertainties, if we had not an *infallible* Rule for our souls, something which may be believed for its own sake, which only Gods Word may safely be,

Nay,

Nay, never did Gods children erre more dangerously then when they eyed natural *causes* and *reason* too much. 'Twas the cause of Sarah's laughing, *after I am waxed old, shall I have pleasure?* and of Zechariah's doubting, *I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.* And therefore Saint Paul sayes, that when he was call'd to be an Apostle, to go and preach amongst the *Heathens*, (in the midst of contempt and persecution) he conferr'd not with flesh and blood; certainly if he had, they would have said to him too, *Master, spare thy self.*

Gen. 18. 12.

Luke 1. 18.

Gal. 1. 16.

Though then we yield that reason is a light; yet we say also 'tis but *noctiluca cerebri*, a glow-worm light; for all its lustre, we have still need of the Sun. I grant it is *the candle of the Lord*: but I am sure withal that it hath need of snuffing; and if at any time it be a rule, it must be (*regula regulata*, not *regulans*) no further a *Rule* then it is its self ruled according to Scripture, and the Word of God.

Aug.

Prov. 20. 17.

Consider, That that very *truth*, *promise*, &c. ^a *Negatively*, which you do believe, does not benefit your souls as to eternity, in that 'tis *rational*, but as 'tis *believed*: for example, that God might commiserate Mankind, and finde out wayes for its recovery, is *rational*; but as this is *rational barely*, it does not at all conduce to our salvation, but as there hath been a Declaration to this purpose made by God in his Word. An *assertion* or *principle* how *rational* soever, is low, faint and dead, as to the begetting or carrying on of a spiritual life, till the *Spirit* it

self does animate and enliven it; 'tis *Gods* speaking of these, or the like truths, in Scripture, and to the heart, which makes them *seed*; apt for the propagating a *new life*. The *reason* in them is but as a stick that bears up a Vine or Plant more precious than its self, but gives it not life. The life of faith is from its self, not from reason. The sum of what hath been spoken amounts to thus much: Reason is our *Reuben*, the top of our excellency, (as men) but if it goes up to our *fathers bed*, it shall not excell; and experience of all ages hath taught us, that none have proved more desperate enemies to the truth of Religion, than many otherwise excellently parted men. Thus we have heard of some who having *digged too deep*, have met with such damps as have extinguish'd the candle they were let down withal; thus learning, as a *flash of lightning*, leaves men in the greater darkness. And surely there is much of that commination, *Isa. 7 9*. fulfill'd amongst us, which the *Septuagint*, and many of the Antients read thus, *if ye will not believe, ye shall not understand*; the things of God are to be *believed* that they may be understood. The modest and humble *believer*, not the captious and proud *Philosopher*, hath the promise to understand them. As beasts, though of more exquisite sense than men, yet cannot determine of humane affairs; so men, if barely, though excellently rational, will be as much at a losse in heavenly matters.

God would not that a tool, any sharp instrument should be lifted up towards the making of his
Altar;

*Apollonius Ty-
aneus, Musoni-
us, Porcius,*
cyc.

*Cypr. lib. 1. ad-
versus Judæos.
Tertull. adver-
sus Marc.
Psalm. 25. 9.
1 Cor. 1. 26.*

Altar; some think the *truth* and substance of that Law was, to shew, how much God did abhorre to have the *point* of the acutest *reason* lifted up upon the Altar of faith.

Exod 10, 29.
Gaulen li
sainte Cour.

How much then certainly are they to blame who draw the Curtains, and shut out in their very *Sermons* and *spiritual discourses*, the *day-light* of *Scripture*, that they may enlighten them, as they think the better, by the *candle of reason*? but I would not prevent my self in the application, which I am now come unto.

This Scripture *instructs, exhorts, comforts*; 'tis *Applic.* useful first for *instruction*; we may hence learn 1. The *nature of faith*; and 2. the *condition of the faithful*.

The *nature of faith*, and concerning it these two things.

1. 'Tis not an *opinion* barely, 'tis an *evidence*.

1. Instruction which is two-fold.
1. In the nature of faith.
1. 'Tis not a bare opinion.

But yet secondly, 'tis not an absolute *assurance*: for 'tis of *things not seen*.

In the first place we hence learn, that true faith is not a bare *opinion or imagination*; there are these two remarkable differences between them.

For first, the object of *opinion* is something look'd upon as in its own nature uncertain; the object of faith as in its self *certain*. The *Scepticks*, those great *Opinionists* held, that there was nothing certain; but notwithstanding whatsoever was said for any matter to day, as much might be said on the contrary side to morrow. But *believers* build upon a word which is not *Yea* and *Nay*, changeable and

2 Cor. i. 18.

inconstant : but 'tis *in Christ Tea*, that is, like himself who is the *same yesterday, to day and for evermore*, Hebr. 13. 8. Men indeed too ordinarily dress Religion, as the Heathens did their gods, or as the Papists do their images, according to the fashion of the time and place in which they live, and think that there is little or nothing more in it. But be not deceiv'd : God will not set his seal in water ; in a fluid transitory *imagination, or opinion* ; but in wax ; in that understanding which (though ductile and flexible) is fit to retain those impressions which his *Spirit* shall make in it.

James 2. 19.

Secondly, Faith differs from *opinion*, in that *opinion is onely matter of speculation, faith is practical* also. The seat of opinion is onely the head, *but with the heart man believes*, Rom. 10. 10. To know and assent unto the truths in Scripture, will not alone make a man a *believer*, unlesse such a one as the Devil is, who *believes and trembles* ; *Interrogo te utrum credis ; dicis, credo : fac quod dicis & fides est.* Aug. 'Tis not a right faith untill it *does* what it *sayes*. Nay, *faith is with all the heart* ; it takes in every *faculty* : for its object hath a double aspect upon the soul ; first as *true*, and so it bespeaks *assent* in the *understanding* ; and then also as *good* ; and thus it excites and draws forth the *will and affections* ; without this latter acting of a truth or promise upon the soul, a man hath no more benefit by it, then he hath nourishment from his food, when he only sees and believes the wholesomnesse of it, but eats it not. Try then your faith by this ; you would not take a false sixpence,

pence; and will ye be put off with a false jewel, a false faith?

On the other side, as faith is not an *opinion* barely, so 'tis not an *assurance*; for though it be an *evidence*, 'tis of *things not seen*; now assurance is a kinde of sight of these things.

2. Faith is not
alwayes an
assurance.
2 Pet. 1. 10.

We will suppose *assurance* much to be endeavoured after, when the Apostle charges us to make *our calling and election sure*; and indeed there is no warmth in a *direct beam*. Faith, which is the *direct act*, (the souls going unto, and relying upon Christ,) will at length save; but the *reflexe act* of *assurance* chiefly comforts. Our present businesse is to shew that they are distinct. Consider then that *faith* is so farre from being an *assurance*, that it must necessarily go before it, otherwise a man might be *assur'd* of what *is not*; and as we are partakers of *humane nature*, before that we know we are; and bear the *image of the earthy* before we know we do; so we bear the *image of the heavenly*, and be partakers of the *divine nature* before we know of it. There is an infancy or non-age in *both natures* as to us; and the *spiritual life here is no more exempted from its weaknesse, than the natural life is from the infirmities which belong unto it.*

I will but name some other particular differences.

1. Faith is constant, 'tis a *seed immortal*; *assurance* is not: the *vision* is sometimes *taken up*, nay suddenly. The *influence* of the Sunne does *alwayes remain*, but the *light* of the Sun does not; it shine, and claps in again.

A 2 to 16.

2. Faith which justifies, admits of no degrees; that is, wheresoever it is, it is in its *compleat essence*, or not at all. The soul cannot be partly married or united unto Christ, and partly not: but on the contrary, *assurance* hath its *degrees*; where it is, it is usually but incomplete; we *know* thus too *but in part*; sometimes we read our *evidences* by a candle-light as well as other-while by a Sunne-beam.

3. The act of faith is grounded upon Gods Word. *Assurance* is chiefly grounded upon experience; though indeed in both the soul is helped by the *Spirit*. Now I have said this the rather for their sakes, *who walk in darknesse and see no light*: such *Trees of the Lord* may stand and grow, when most shaken with the winde, and clouded from the Sun.

1a, 50. ult.

Remember then what ye have heard this day *faith* to be; *viz.* As the miraculous cloud which we read of, (*Exod. 14. 20.*) which hath its *light side* as 'tis an *evidence*; but hath its *dark side* also as 'tis of *things not seen*.

2. Instruct. In the condition of a believer.

We come to *tell you the condition of a believer*, which cannot but be *desirable*: Faith hath made him a great one indeed, richer than the richest; 'tis *this man* only that can say truly, as they did vainly, *Hos. 12. 8.* *I have found me out substance*; a carnal man hath but *shadowes*, *lies* which he trusts unto. He *may dream he eats, &c.* but if ever God awaken him either here, or hereafter, he shall finde *he is hungry*, truly indigent, and full of wants.

Oh man *greatly beloved*! this is he that hath made the best discovery of what before was but a *terra incognita*, an unknown Region; where true Gold and Jewels of real *price* are to be found: and to this place he travels all the remainder of his life. nay more, he hath a kind of *possession* of it already; and is whilst he lives on earth, *ὑπεροπολίτης*, a Citizen of heaven, and there he hath his conversation: enjoying by *faith* the *happinesse*, and doing by *love* the *duties* of that place. As to earth he is *vel præsens absens*, like Archimedes at the taking of *Syracuse*, never minding what becomes of the world and worldly matters. Faith brings him better Relations, Riches, Possessions, then their fading ones are; and therefore as to *heaven*, he is *vel Absens præsens*, his heart as another *fore-runner* is entred in. He hath sent his soul as a *Prodromus* to prepare the way for his body. And in the mean while let the winds blow from what corner they will, *impavidum ferient*, they can't cause him to make ship-wrack of his *substance*. Thus in the midst of a storme the nodes of the compasse remain immovable, when there is nothing else in the whole ship but is tossed too and fro. The other things in the ship, as the other men of the world, are hurried whither the present Tempest and season carries them. But believers, as the points in the Compasse, are fixt at all times; being governed not by the various windes, but by the constant heavens.

Phil. 3. 20.

Math. 7. 25.

Ah how much then hath the meanest true servant of God to blesse him for: *flesh and blood hath*

Mat 16. 17.

not revealed these things, acquir'd this substance for them; but your Father which is in heaven. Faith is a supernatural gift, not onely in respect of nature corrupted, as all other graces be; but in respect also of nature as 'twas at first created. Faith is not as other graces, in our regeneration repaired, but as it were new built from the ground. Man in innocency, (though he had a power to have obeyed God in whatsoever he should have commanded; yet) he had not formally any such grace as faith; whose Object is that very Attribute which Adam then had no need of; to wit, the mercy of God in Christ. And what a vast expence was God at to create faith in thee? He made the whole World with a fiat, a words speaking: but when the Apostle tells us of his making faith, Ephes. 1. 19. 'tis, sayes he, by the exceeding greatnesse of his power; every word hath its weight and emphasis, by no less a power then that which raised up Christ from his grave, when the sin of the world (a grave-stone not easily to be removed) lay upon him to keep him there.

Rom. 10. 8.

Nay, what shall we render for Gods Word manifested in our dayes? this is the word of faith. Let those who think themselves so sufficiently enlightened without it, look upon Athens the eye of Greece, as Greece was (at that time for knowledge) the eye of the whole world: And consider how miserably blinde and idolatrous it was till Paul their Phosphorus came amongst them. Is the filme over the eye of our mindes lesse then theirs was? or our cataracts easilier couch'd? hath mans nature taken any higher degrees

Acts 17. 29.

degrees in knowledge amongst us, than it did in that *University* : I fear me, that they who decry the *super-intendency* of faith, were it not for those truths which it alone hath *evidenc'd*, (for all their goodly reason and parts) would now be a worshipping an *unknown God* too.

But it is time I now hasten to those especial duties which this Text expects from you : be exhorted then,

1. To labour for faith ; *with all your gettings*, Exhort. 1.
get this way of spiritual knowledge : what would ye not give for such a *Philosophers stone*, as some have fancied ; which can turn all things into gold ? the *Elixar* of faith can do this. The hardest Providences that believers go through ; poverty, sickness, death ; nay temptations, desertions, infirmities, &c. onely faith can make them all more *pretious than gold which perishes* : whereas others have riches, &c. *for their hurt*. These very *afflictions work together for the believer's good* : the *thick cloud* was as beneficial to the *Israelites*, as the *fiery pillar*.

Ecclef. 5. 13.
 Rom. 8. 28.

Faith only can turn your *shadowes* into *substances* : your *appearances* into *realities*. It hath a kind of *Almightiness* in it ; and can *speak to things that are not, as if they were*. If faith do but say, *Let there be light, holiness, &c.* it shall be so, Mark 9. 23.

Other things, as *riches, honours, &c.* they are *not*, though *seen* : for will ye set *your eyes upon things which are not*, sayes God ? whilst you say they *are*, they may cease to *be* ; and so prove you

Prov. 23. 5.

Prov. 8. 8.

a *liar* to your face, but on the contrary: The objects of faith, as heaven, and the happineſſe there, though *not ſeen*, yet they *are*, ſubſtantial and abiding; and ſuch as will never make a ſingle diſappointment. And is not true gold in your *Counting-houſes*, though *not ſeen*, better than painted gold in a picture, though *ſeen*?

The Apoſtle tells us that we ſhould *take the ſhield of faith* *ἐν τῇ πίστει* above all things; nay, in all things. (as *Hierom* reads it) Faith is like ſalt, which every ſacrifice muſt be ſalted with; without which, 'tis impoſſible to pleaſe God, *Hebr.* 11. 6. 'Twas by faith only that *Abel* offered a more excellent ſacrifice than *Cain*, *Hebr.* 11. 4. This is the root as ye have heard, which though ragged and unlovely in appearance, yet all the fruit of the *Tree of life*, the whole ſyſteme of graces are extracted from it. The *dead childe* indeed is *reaſons*; the *living childe*, where it is, is *faiths*.

Exhort. 2.

Be content to make faith your evidence. To think Gods revealed will the beſt reaſon that you can yield your aſſent unto. Do not fear'twill *un-man* you: ye never come to be *your ſelves*, to act *truly rationally*, till ye come to be believers. The *Worldling* that followes no better than a glorious bubble, (with the neglect of better objects) is not *himſelf*; and that *Scholar* that too eagerly purſues *School-divinity* with the neglect of *Scripture-divinity*, is as little *himſelf*. *Much learning hath made thee mad*, is a truth: only miſtaken by *Festus* in the application.

Act; 26. 24.

If we look for certainty, where can we finde it
ff

if not with him that neither *deceives*, nor can be *deceived*? Is not Gods sole *affirmation* equivalent to all the several means whereby knowledge is acquir'd? Is an *I saw it*, a clearer proof than God *said it*? or is the connexion betwixt the *causes* and *effects*, (which possibly too are but imagin'd such) more inseparable than betwixt Gods *Word* and *Truth*? If God be neither ignorant, nor faithless in what he *affirms*, thou art sure enough. And lest ye should be scandaliz'd at *believing*, consider but what confusion and disorder there would soon be in the world, if in humane affairs themselves, we should only go by *science*, and *believe* nothing.—
si quod nescitur credendum non est, quomodo servient parentibus liberi? 'tis Saint *Austins* argument. How shall children know that these are their parents, whom God hath commanded them to honour? are not even mothers themselves caus'd to believe their by-standing Friends, Midwives and Nurses whereby they come to know those children which they ever after so tenderly affect?

Aug. De utilitate credendi.

Nay, we are forc'd in worldly matters, to act by a *civil* faith, quite contrary to that, which that that *we see*, would perswade us to. Thus the Husbandman throwes away his seed; sometimes too in unkindly weather; when to be sure he hath not a demonstrative knowledge that he shall reap any benefit by it. And the Mariners hale their Ships out into the Roades, whilst the Windes are yet contrary unto them. Well may we then in religious matters, think it not at all unbecoming us to be acted by a *divine* faith: which whosoever shall take

away, (let him place what he will in its stead) he had as good take away the apple from the eye, or the heart from the body.

But what if any should be further inquisitive after the reasons of those things which are asserted in Scripture? A poor simple believer might answer that of *Paul* in such a case, *where is the Disputer of this world?* 1 Cor. 1. 20. There is no need of the Disputers art, to defend or oppose, where God hath once declared his *will*; which, if all reasons else fail, the faithful *will believe, because 'tis impossible*. and when the believer is hardest put to it; he knowes that he that moderates in the act, and sits in the *Chair of Truth*, is most concern'd to solve the objections; and sayes, he, *Lord, Thou shalt one day answer for me.* Εἰς τοῖς περὶ θεῷ μετὰ τὴν γράμιν τὸ τὸν ἀγνώστην ὁμολογεῖν. A bare *it is written*, was enough to confute and confound the subtillest adversary. —

And this is the highest honour that such sorry creatures as we are, can give to God; when for the defence of the least word, but once pronounc'd by him, (notwithstanding all the contradiction that can be devised against it) a Christian dares suffer, were it possible, ten thousand deaths. *I cannot dispute*, cries the Martyr, *but I can die.*

I confesse this is a hard, a very hard duty; we think nothing more easie, but we finde nothing more difficult than to *believe*. When God calls for *our estates, &c.* none but a fordid spirit will deny them: but when the Lord requires the subjection of *all our imaginations*, that our very *reason*, like *Si- meon*, should be taken and bound before him. The

Lord

*Credo quia im-
possibile. Tert.*

*Cyril. Hier.
Catech. 6.
Mat. 4. 10.*

Lord pardon his servant in this, cries the worldly ingenuous person. *Puduit doctos homines, à Discipulis Platonis fieri Discipulos Christi.* He had rather have *Plato* and *Aristotle* for his *Masters*, who pretend to prove what they say; than *Christ*, who requires *belief on his word*. But remember what *Saint Austin* sayes to encourage thee, *if thou now wilt believe what yet thou dost not see, thou shalt certainly see; what now thou dost believe.* On the other side, to such an one who will not believe *Gods Word*, the promise; unlesse he sees it: I will say to him in the Name of the Lord, as the Prophet did to the Noble-man we read of, *2 Kings 7. 2. Thou shalt see it indeed with thine eyes, but shalt not tast thereof.* I might adde.

Be exhorted to have a life answerable to this grace of faith; this *denominating grace*, whence all *Gods children* are call'd *believers*. My meaning is; let your conversation be answerable to that description of faith you have now heard of. *Disce hic quam cogitationes fidelis, & Christiani debent esse sublimes; quam non terrena, presentia & caduca; sed caelestia, futura & aeterna; cogitare, sperare, prosequi: de iis loqui, & anhelare debeat:* Oh learn to have *high and heavenly thoughts*. Thy portion, thy line, is not *fallen* here below; not in these things that are enjoy'd here, or *seen* here: but do not murmur or repine 'tis but according to the exigency of thy condition that *God* deals thus with thee, thou canst not be a *believer*, and see or enjoy too. Methinks thy countenance should be no more sad: *Foy is comely for thee;* which I am in

Augustine.
Fides est credere quod non vides; cuius merces & veritas est videre quod credidisti. Aug.
Tract. 27. In *Johan.*

Exhort. 2.

Alaspe in locum.

Τὴν δὲ βλάστησιν αὐτῶν ἰσχυρῶς ἐκπύοντες τῆς πίστεως, Chrysost. in loc.
Hebr. 11. 1.

the last place to offer unto thee; and that in the saddest night of affliction that can befall thee.

Consolation. The *evening* in thy *day* is *first* too, but art not *thou as one that watch for the morning?* and when it seems darkest, the day-light of eternal deliverance is at hand. Faith shews thee that sun-rising which will never set. The cloud of present evils is not so thick, but faith can see through it the *things hoped for*. And what though they be not outwardly apparent or visible? the Trades-man gains most by his stock, when 'tis *farthest out of sight*, and when his cashe at home is low, he may be very rich in commodities he hath abroad. I have read of *Alexander*, that when he went first into *Asia*, he gave away whole countreys, (which he had already in possession,) to his followers; and being asked what he would reserve for himself; he answered, *Hope*; and how much more may it suffice thee, when all other things are taken away? *it cannot make thee asham'd* as it might, and did him. Nay, can all that God is, and hath, suffice to cheare and refresh thee? (he is too covetous indeed that cannot be satisfied with God) *Faith makes him, and his to be yours*. (as love on the other side makes you and yours to be his) Gods *Sonne* is yours for your redemption; his *Spirit* yours, for your sanctification; his *words* yours, for your instruction; his *power* yours, for your protection; his *glory* is yours, for your coronation. I shall conclude all with that notable saying of *Bernard*, which indeed does *include* several of the *uses* fore-mentioned. *Faith*, sayes he, tells us, *there are un-*
heard

Rom. 8. 3.

heard of, unthought of blessings prepar'd: Oh sayes hope;
 these are prepar'd for me, and kept for me; well sayes cha-
 rity, or holy love; I'll runne to them, and endeavour
 after them: to which I will only adde my saying
 too, from the mouth of the Lord. Blessed is that
 servant, whom the Lord when he comes, shall finde
 so believing, and so doing.

*Dicit iller; ga-
 rata sunt magna
 & inexcogita-
 bilia: dicit sps;
 mihi illa ser-
 vantur: curro ad
 ea, ait caritas.
 Bern. 1. Serm.
 in Psal. 90.
 Mat. 24. 46.*

FINIS.
